

Chair's report

Claire Wainwright

With some of my volunteer colleagues, I have spent the last few months considering proposed Ramblers governance changes that will be considered further at a meeting of Council later in the year. While changes mooted for Areas and Groups — on which more in future editions of *Stile* — were not taken forward for further consideration at this point, it was good to be asked for our views in Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area, and to be listened to.

It was clear that members active in local Groups feel passionately about protecting what is good about them and want the best for the Ramblers long term. For me that's all about making the Ramblers relevant to more people, and helping to solve some of our country's longstanding social ills. Having moved house recently to a village set in beautiful countryside outside an industrial town, I have been studying with fresh eyes the footpath networks linking the two. The village is awash with footpaths, but in the town it is another story. That is why the Ramblers Access to Nature Campaign (see page 12) is so necessary. The UK Government's All-Party Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature Group's recent paper highlights 20 million people living further than 15 minutes' walk from green spaces or water, a sad state of affairs.

Extending existing access is a first step towards improvement and that is where we in the Ramblers can help, both practically through our volunteering work, and culturally through our desire to make positive change happen.

The governance changes are the first step in making the Ramblers fitter to tackle such challenges. My experience over the last few months has brought home to me the passion of our volunteers for the work they do. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their hard work and commitment. Anyone interested in getting more involved can check out the Ramblers volunteering webpage at:

www.ramblers.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-opportunities.

We are also looking for volunteers locally, particularly footpath wardens (see page 14) and walk leaders (contact me at hnmchair@gmail.com for more details). We also have vacancies on our Area committee.

